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WOMAN'S COLLEGE  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA



(IN THIS ISSUE: THE EGGHEAD ON CAMPUS



## from the editor's desk . . .

... "We call them like we see them . . ." this from a staff member in a humorous attempt to console us on our discovery that, for the first time in fifty-odd years, the summer issue of CORADDI was coming out as the spring issue despite the fact that the spring issue, the Arts Forum edition, had been out for some several weeks. In regard to our mistake about the seasons, this was small comfort, but we do feel that the remark itself applies to more aspects of this issue than the cover.

We are calling them as we see them: "The Egghead on Campus" is an attempt not to solve but merely to state, for examination and consideration, a problem on this campus and in the nation, as we see it. We are aware that the problem of the artist-intellectual in the community (or any variation thereof) is not only an age-old one, but also an extremely touchy and controversial one. But because we feel that the alleviation of such a problem, if it exists, could or should arise in the environs of a liberal arts college, we also feel that an organ like CORADDI should logically attempt at least a clarification of the nature of such a situation.

The resolution of views apparently so divergent as those of the egghead and the non-egghead may lie partially in an examination of the divergencies, it may lie in realms of long, long-range general education programs, or it may only lie, and we hope this is not the case, in an admission that there is no solution.

Disagreement is wide to the extent that there is, in all probability, not a single member of CORADDI staff itself who would concur unqualifiedly with each statement made either on this page or in the feature. If, however, the two "camps" exist or appear to exist on this campus, and if this feature or any other phase of CORADDI activities serves to diminish barriers of misunderstanding or to establish any sort of line of communication, then the immediate and particular items of difference are irrelevant to the larger achievement.

This has to do with our old, old song about the function and purposes of a literary magazine on the campus of a liberal arts college which carries on an extensive fine arts program. We have always felt that there are certain aspects of the CORADDI which, by its nature and definition as a literary magazine, are relatively inflexible: chiefly the quality of the stories, poems, and art work. The academic courses in the creative arts here are geared to a certain qualitative level which stems from professional standards of fine art. Admittedly, few student products ever actually achieve a finished realization of this professional level and CORADDI endeavors to publish only the best student writing, yet it is these same standards which determine our selection of "best." Consequently we are often in disfavor either with those who hold a different literary standard or with those who feel that we have failed to fulfill our own standard. This is unfortunate but, as we see it in view of our obligation to the campus and to the fine arts program, unavoidable. We welcome always the chance to read and consider for publication any and all stories and poems which are produced on the campus.

Through the reviews, features, and the efforts of the CORADDI Club—and these are flexible aspects of CORADDI—we hope to act as a kind of "emissary" for the artists which we publish, as an informative organ which does not necessarily or at all either condescend or elevate but simply reasonably offers and invites. Through these functions we attempt to become a part of the widening scope of college tastes and to enlarge the meeting ground for interested and interesting minds. We want and welcome always suggestions as to how we can better do this.

\* \* \* \* \*

Our second feature is, paradoxically, also a story: a very fine translation from the Japanese by Yoko Ishikawa of a story by the author of *Rashomon*. We are very pleased to have the opportunity of printing the story's first appearance in English. The film *Rashomon* was originally a short story and appears as the title story in a book of collected stories by Mr. Ryunosuke, which may be found in the Woman's College library.

B. Mc.

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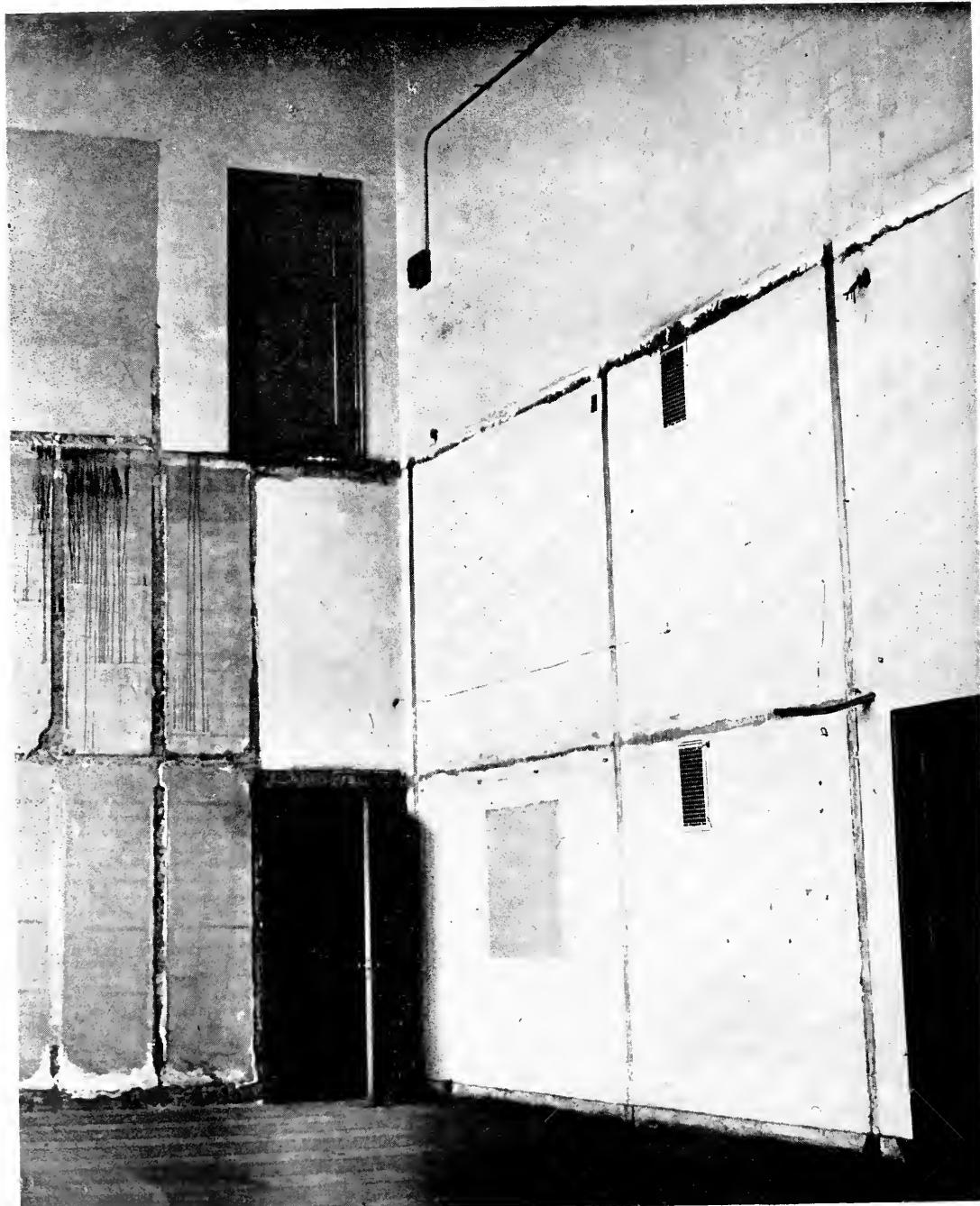
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*by Priscilla Farah*

## Death in April

Julie had not been thinking about Fritz when Willie came. She had not been thinking of Eden either. And as time passed she wondered what she had been thinking just at the moment when Willie arrived to take her to the city. It had been on the first of April and Julie had walked through the woods that day, cutting down the thorned twigs which had grown over the path while Fritz was ill. She had done this partly because April first had always seemed like the first day of spring to her, and partly because she had been told that Fritz would be coming home soon. She was happy about that because then everything would be the same again. Her father and Eden and Fritz would laugh in the living room at night while she was in bed overhead. It always made her feel very safe to know they were downstairs. She had never thought of a time when they would not be.

It was that same April first that Fritz died, that night when Julie could not remember what she had been thinking. Her father had been to New York all day with Eden, Fritz' wife, but he had been there nearly every day since Fritz went to the hospital. It wasn't unusual for her to be alone at home, even though they lived way back in the country. The house was large and white and the woods grew over and around it, reminding her of warm, encircling arms. As long as the arms were there, nothing could happen. She had thought this many times as she looked out the windows, seeing the twigs reaching in towards her, covering the white of the house and hiding the mountains behind them. She was not thinking this when Willie came; maybe she was not thinking anything.

She was startled when Willie called to her from downstairs because she had not heard a car come up the drive. The driveway was about a half-mile long and she could always tell when a car rounded the curve just below the house. She ran downstairs, very glad to see someone because she had been lonely, alone there all evening. When she came down the brick stairs into the living room, Willie was stamping out the last sparks from the fire which Julie had built earlier. She hadn't built the fire because it was cold; she simply liked to look at it. The whole room looked different when there was a fire burning and when she had nothing else to do, or did not want to do anything else, she could stare into it and dream. It was the best thing to look at when she wanted to dream. Willie turned to her and her dark face was lined with white. Julie had never seen her look like that before and she had known Willie for a long time. Willie had been Julie's nurse when Julie was a baby and when Julie's mother had died Willie had stayed with the Langdon family. That was 14 years ago; Julie was 15 now.

Willie was wearing her driving clothes, blue slacks and a navy jacket which hugged her light figure. She had on the pony boots that Julie had given her for Christmas, and Julie thought that she could see her toes stretching nervously under the soft leather. She could never tell what Willie was feeling except that when she was unhappy her deep eyes looked deeper. They looked that way now.

"Fritz died," Willie said. "I'm driving into town to take some things to Eden."

"May I go?" Julie heard herself say this and a second later she wondered if she had really said it. So often she would only think things that she meant to say.

"I came to ask you." Willie came over and put an arm around Julie. She looked at her; Willie seemed to be waiting for her to cry, but, somehow, she didn't want to.

Willie talked more than she usually did while they were driving into the city. But she did not talk about Fritz; she talked about everything else. Willie drove well and quickly. On the way to New York she told Julie about the trouble that she had been having with the old kerosene lamp which she had been trying to restore. It was a funny story and they both laughed. Julie felt that it was time; she had been wanting to laugh about something. It was not long before they reached the George Washington Bridge but there was not the usual argument about who would pay the fifty-cent toll. Willie handed it to the policeman and he smiled pleasantly at them.

Julie tried to imagine what he would have said if he had known that they were going to see Eden because Fritz had just died. What did people say? Then she wondered what she could say to Eden and to her father, who had been Fritz' friend and Fritz had seemed to be her father's only real friend. Julie thought what a warm and wonderful man her father was and she prided herself that she was closer to him than anyone else except maybe Fritz. The lights from the Henry Hudson Parkway blinked up at them from below the bridge. They had always reminded her of a game of darts, flitting and elusive as you tried to place them while driving across the bridge. And she asked herself what Fritz would think about the lights if he knew he could not think anymore. Her reasoning confused her as she tried to picture Fritz, small and virile, yet one of the strongest-looking people she knew. What did people look like when they were dead? Death frightened her and she wished that she could stop thinking about it. She had never known anyone well that had died. Still, she had always been frightened of death, not of her death or anyone else's in particular, just of death itself. She hoped that they

wouldn't ask her to see Fritz. She had known Fritz since she was very little and she had loved him, often wondering if she loved Fritz or Eden more. It was always such fun to answer the phone and hear Fritz' voice ask with his heavy German accent, "Hello, Julie, iss your fadder dere?" She teased him and corrected his English and he had made her feel important when she was just a little girl. But as she rode, sitting beside Willie, she didn't feel sad. It was another feeling.

The elevator took them up to the third floor of the Dorset Hotel where Eden had stayed while Fritz was in the hospital. The corridors were lighted by small lamps covered with green and gold shades. Each lamp was suspended over a mirror and Julie glanced at herself as she passed them. She looked much too well, she thought. They paused outside the door of apartment 3-G and Willie pushed the buzzer in the woodwork. Julie didn't want to see them, any of them, she didn't want to go into the room, but they were there and they had to go in. A woman that Julie had never seen before opened the door and led them into the apartment. Julie stood in the center of the crowded living room and tried to blend with the blurred figures about her. It was not at all the way she had expected it to be; it seemed more like a late-afternoon cocktail party than a gathering because of a death. Large circles of smoke were traveling loosely from the crowd upwards to the ceiling and many faces were lost in the mist of it. She did not see many people she knew, people from the country. But she saw at once that Eden was not in the room, and the door to the bedroom was closed.

The woman who had let them in was pouring coffee now, and behind her Julie saw her father sitting on a gaily-colored footstool in a corner of the room. He was studying his fingernails and it seemed to her he had not looked up for a long time. She wished that she could go and put her arms around him and tell him how sorry she was but she also knew that it would not sound right if she said it. So Julie stood in the midst of the shrouded room and said nothing, afraid to move for fear that someone might speak to her and ask her for her sympathies. Everything blended and blurred around her as though not one figure or object was separate from another, a haze of smoke, coffee, and whispers that blew the smoke further toward the ceiling. Julie looked again for her father through the haze and she saw that he had moved; he was standing staring at Julie and waiting for her to come. She walked over to him and took his hand which rested against the back of the sofa.

"We brought some things to Eden." Julie found that she was whispering too.

"I'm glad you came, dear. It's good to have you here. I've been feeling rather lost." Her father's voice was soft but his eyes were strained and skin hung on his face where health should have been. And it was then that Julie wanted to cry, not because of Fritz, but because every hurt of her father's was hers too,

and he was more hurt and tired than she had ever seen him.

"Daddy, you look so tired. Won't you come home with us tonight? I know you'd feel better if you did." Julie knew that there was no point in asking this for her father would never leave anywhere just because it would be better for him.

"No, darling. I'll stay with Eden but I want you to go home with Willie. I'm sure Eden wants to see you now though. She's lying down in the other room." They walked through the room towards the bedroom door, and Julie counted the steps as they walked. It was something that she had always done when she wanted time to pass quickly. Julie rapped softly on the door and her father pushed it open. Eden was sitting on the edge of one of the beds. Her face was towards them. It was ashen, and the Titian hair was wet and loose over her face. Julie went to the bed and pushed Eden's hair back, and held Eden when her head went into Julie's neck, and Julie could feel the tears sinking into her sweater. Still it was unreal, and Julie felt that this was not Eden, but it was all something to do with Fritz, and she saw Fritz watching them and how strange all this would seem to him. Then her father was touching Eden's knee and Eden was looking at them smiling, yet the corners of her mouth went down instead of up, and Julie thought that the smile was unreal too because it was not Eden's smile.

"We'll be fine," Eden said, as though she were not really saying it, and Julie answered knowing that her answer was not right.

"Of course you will. And Daddy's going to stay and bring you home tomorrow. Willie says you will stay with us."

"No," Eden said. "I'd rather be home and they will bring Fritz." Eden looked through them and past the door and asked Julie if she could have some coffee. Julie brought the coffee and kissed her father and Eden goodbye. Willie was waiting for her in the hall, pressing the button for the elevator.

The drive seemed long going home that night, and it was late when Julie went to bed. She felt very alone in her part of the house with her father not there, and Willie asleep in the wing over the kitchen. She watched the trees outside the window across from her bed as they swayed, tapping softly at the panes when the wind moved them. Julie tried not to pull the covers over her head. She did not want to tell herself that she was afraid, afraid of death, and of Fritz, because in that short time he had become death to her. She made herself remember him as she had known him two weeks before but she could not see him that way anymore. He was white and lifeless, moving about without knowledge or thought, and he was with her or with Eden. But Eden was not frightened; she only loved him. "Fritz loved me and I loved him and this is wrong and selfish." And Julie said this over and over until she fell asleep, with the covers still pulled tightly about her face.

The next morning Julie wakened to the tapping of the branches on her window. The breeze of the night before was still about the house but it was soothing to her in the morning. As she rose and dressed she thought about the day which was before her. She had to go to Eden's, into the house which had changed in one night, and see faces which had changed, too. Fritz's and Eden's home was one of the oldest in the county, and many people must have died there before Fritz, but the house had never reminded her of people dying there. And she wondered if it had become different to all the other people who had loved it years before, if it had been different to them when their friends had died there. Julie finished combing her hair, and went downstairs to the kitchen. Willie was putting the icing on a cake which Julie was to take with her to Eden's, and a ham was wrapped in metal paper on the table. No one would have wanted to cook at Eden's that day, and there would be all the neighbors coming in and out to see Eden and to look at Fritz. Julie did not mind taking the food, if only she would not have to stay or look at Fritz herself. She tried to think where Eden would have them put the casket, whether it would be in the sitting room downstairs, or in the large antique room on the second floor. She wanted to know where he would be before she went to the house.

Julie carried the cake and ham carefully as she walked the short distance through the woods that morning. The path was just as she had left it the day before, neatly pruned with the overgrown branches piled on either side of the stone wall which followed the path. She felt the ground, crisp with only the loose smooth patches of moss to disturb the monotony. She wondered how many times Fritz had been through their path, how many times all of them had gone back and forth between the two houses. Her father had said once that they should set up a delicatessen in the center of the path, just halfway between the two houses. Eden and Willie were to do the cooking. Fritz would keep the path clear and be in charge of the money, and she and her father would generally look after the condition of the store. They had laughed about the idea often, deciding to be exclusive about the people that were to be able to come to them as customers. They ought to have travelled the path at least fifty times before they were eligible to enter the delicatessen.

Julie found that she was smiling while she remembered all this and her mind drifted into other conversations and other images. She saw Fritz the day he had come back from the city in a bright red shirt. Eden and her father had been slightly horrified when Fritz had told them that he had been to a Guild meeting, and he was tired of being told that he was the only conservative member of the committee who was able to control the finances. Julie tried to recall his voice as he had said this, the harsh German s's and the soft gutteral sound which dominated his speech. Fritz loved language, and he always hurried to the diction-

ary or encyclopedia whenever a word or name was mentioned which he had not heard before. Eden had given him the newest *Encyclopedia Britannica* for Christmas that year and Fritz had buried himself in it for weeks. He had been upset, for because of it, he had not had time to read the papers completely each day. They had all said that Fritz was the only person they knew who read *The New York Times* all the way through, every day and Sundays.

Julie tucked the ham more firmly under her arm as she climbed the stone wall which was the halfway mark, where they had decided that the delicatessen should be situated. She stopped when she reached the other side of the wall and leaned back against it. From there she could see the tor with its beacon which never blinked in the day time. Soon the mountain would be covered with the white of the dogwoods, and the Spring would be hidden behind a screen of tiny blossoms which netted together against each other. Her father had said that he had moved to the road beneath the tor because he had driven there one day in April and seen the dogwoods and the stream which ran at the foot of the mountain. The stream was a tributary of the Hudson River, but they had never been able to row to the river because of the small waterfalls which dotted the current of the brook as far as it flowed. Julie closed her eyes and felt the roughness of the rocks beneath her hands. She wished that she could stay there forever, standing against the wall, and feeling the air pricking her face like the cool sweetness of a cleansing lotion. Then a harsh chill passed through her, and again she knew that she was afraid. And it was fright that kept her standing there wishing for a braveness that was not hers, and an understanding which her father had tried to give her. She had managed fairly well the night before, but then she had not been aware of Fritz' presence. And he would be in the house, yet not knowing that he was there. Or did he know? Was he anywhere at all? Religion said that he was and her own mind said that he was not, that he had been so much and now he was so little. Julie opened her eyes and looked at the mountain once more, before she picked up a stone and threw it ahead of her in the path. She watched it roll and stop, and began to follow it, to throw it again and not to stop until she crossed the wooden bridge in front of Eden's house. It was Eden's house.

The kitchen door was open and Julie did not close it when she entered the kitchen. Her father was sitting at the table in the center of the room, and she was not sure that he had seen her come in. She placed the food on the shelf by the sink and waited for him to speak. Her father smiled at her and she could feel the affection in his eyes.

"We didn't think you'd get here so early, Julie. And what are all the packages?" Her father rose from the table as he said this.

"Willie sent them," Julie said. "She thought that you all should have some extra food. She's been up since seven fixing it." Julie pulled up another chair

and sat down at the table. Her father finished examining the ham and turned on the coffee pot at the stove.

"Coffee, Julie?" he asked. Julie nodded to him, and thought that he looked as though he had had no sleep. But, of course, he would not have had much chance to sleep the night before. Julie wanted to ask where Eden was, and if they had come with Fritz yet, but she decided to wait until he would tell her. She didn't say anything more, only held her father's hand and watched the bubbles bounce on the transparent cover of the coffee pot. They seemed distorted and jumped from one side of the lid to the other as though hands were trying to catch them from beneath. The house was quiet. She listened to their breathing and the brook outside and the rhythmic popping noises of the coffee. Was Fritz in the other room, or upstairs, or had he come at all? She stiffened, because he might be as near to her as in the sitting room. Or she would have to watch the men carry the casket from the hearse and bring it into the house where she sat. And again she wanted to ask where Eden was, but she could not just then.

"Eden's upstairs," her father answered her unspoken question. "She's putting some more flowers around that just came. It's strange—Fritz said that he would not want flowers when he died, but Eden loves every bouquet that comes." His face was reassuring, and Julie thought that he did not look half as tired when he spoke.

"Will she want some coffee?" Julie asked. He said that he imagined that she would, so Julie took three cups and saucers out of the white cabinet behind them. She was holding the coffee pot when Eden came down the stairs and into the kitchen. Julie nodded brightly to her and held up a cup questioningly. Eden sat down in one of the straight chairs and said that she would like some. Julie watched her rest her elbows on the wooden table and run her hands through her thin, pretty hair. Eden looked her best in color combinations of red, and she was wearing a purple sweater and a dark red skirt. But her face was as it had been the night before, distant and swollen, and the skin transparent as it pressed tightly around her mouth. Her smile was still grotesque for it was a smile for sorrow and without meaning, seemingly only to distort her face. Julie finished pouring the coffee and brought the steaming cups to the table.

"Would you like to see your Fritz?" Julie felt her nerves tense and her fingers straighten. She searched her father's face for help but he did not understand or know her fear. Julie looked back at Eden, into her lost and pleading eyes, and she wished she could say to Eden that she would do anything else for her—anything else. But there was nothing that she could say; she would have to follow her up the stairs and into the room with flowers, and with Fritz in the room somewhere.

"Of course, of course I will," Julie heard herself answer, her voice whispering and weakened, and she saw Eden's face relax as she took her elbows from the table and stood. Julie followed Eden through the kitchen door into the sitting room and up the flight of stone stairs to the second floor. She thought that she saw a thousand different pictures all in strange colors and shapes. They were before her as she walked, blending with the purple of Eden's sweater and hiding the steps from her eyes. It was restful not to be able to see, for Julie was hardly aware that they had reached the head of the stairs. She saw her pictures blend with the faded swirls of the wallpaper, and then form themselves motionless in a doorway. The room was dark and the change of light tore the shapes from Julie's eyes. She stared into the dimness. Could she go in, follow Eden into the room? And then Eden was bending over the coffin which rested parallel to the long window seat. Her hands were cupping the grayed face which lay against the smooth cushion and her back was shaking as she knelt. Julie could not see Fritz' face, and she was afraid his face would be like his hands, drained and still, never to unclasp. His fingers rested lightly against the white of his shirt which was whiter because of the darkness of the room. Julie shifted her eyes about the room, spotted with bursts of flowers and ribbons. All the flowers were white and Julie wished that someone had sent a wreath of yellow or lavender. There was nothing to see but the flowers, all else was blurred in the dimness of the drawn curtains.

"The flowers are beautiful." Julie felt that she should not have said this; it was so trivial, and Eden seemed not to have heard.

"Beautiful face. Oh, God." Eden's voice was lost in the coffin and Julie could see the tears come, glossy as they ran down Eden's arm onto the satin pillow.

"Yes," Julie said, as she moved towards Eden, and Fritz' face was clear. Julie put her hand on Eden's head and stared at Fritz' face. It was ugly. And it had been beautiful. His eyes were falsely closed and his mouth was lined with blue, almost as if someone had taken a pen and outlined each crease in his lips. Julie trembled, a surge which ran completely through her until it reached the fingertips of her hand which still rested on Eden's head. Ugly and dreadful and unreal. He could not be there; he could not be in that casket forever to rot and die and lie there—and lie there—and lie there. Julie's footsteps were quick and unsure as she backed away from the coffin.

"Don't stay, Julie." Eden's voice was broken and the words came with light breaths between them. Julie walked as slowly as she could, even counting her steps until she reached the door, then the hallway and the stairs. She ran through the sitting room and into the kitchen where her father held her tightly and she pressed her head against his chest.

"Julie, darling, I'm sorry." His voice filled her with love again, and part of the fear and revulsion

*(Continued on Page 8)*

# The Egghead on Campus

*... And all should cry, Beware! Beware!  
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!  
Weave a circle round him thrice,  
And close your eyes with holy dread,  
For he on honey-dew bath fed,  
And drunk the milk of paradise.*

—KUBLA KAHN, Coleridge.

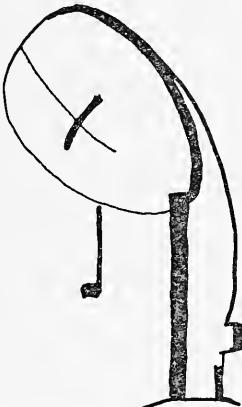
Within the time of our growing generation—and we think it is no longer possible to avoid or refute the fact—there has settled upon us an immense disgruntlement. In terms of expression, of “culture,” of a living civilization, we are beginning to lose our way. Alternating, as we have been forced to, between periods of mass hysteria and pretenses of calm, we are in danger of producing nothing but a still-born society. People who, a generation or so ago, would have been the prophets, the prime movers, the founders and defenders of intellectual growth and freedom, who would have pointed the way like beacons, have been beaten into corners, drummed out of town. They have become “the hollow men... headpiece filled with straw, alas!” Hollow men: in short, eggheads.

So they are on the defensive. They are writing big thick books and magazine articles about their Shame and Glory. They are being investigated by McCarthy, they are having deep difficulties securing ambassador appointments to Germany. And when they run for president, they are virtually black-balled. Collectively, they are acquiring the most gigantic persecution complex since the Christian martyrs. Why?

As a nation, we have suffered a “sea-change” into something far from rich but very strange indeed. In the past decade, we have acquired the instruments of self-destruction, and have missed out on the self-control that comes with maturity. We are an adolescent nation lapsing into a kind of senility; we are afraid. The fear of death is reactionary. The egghead is traditionally liberal. And in a nation whose largest metropolis is plastered with What-to-Do-in-Case-of-Atomic-Attack posters, the egghead is an object of holy dread. Beware of looking too deeply—beware, because the national and world Peace and Quiet which we need to believe exists must not be disturbed by those who cannot stop short of the heart of the matter. They call us the

Silent Generation; the fear has sifted down and is powdering our shoulders.

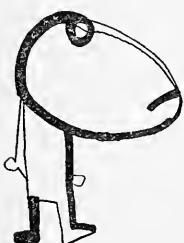
This is the situation. In embryonic state, it exists on our campus and on the campuses of the colleges and universities of the country. We view telecasts of the House Un-American Activities Committee brow-beating respectable university professors and scholars into admitting that, in youth, they joined transient collegiate Onward-and-Upward societies. For this, they lose job and reputation. And the scholars and professors are the Eggheads cum laude.



The situation has not as yet reached such an ominous state on the undergraduate level. There are no loyalty committees or pogroms and it is unlikely that there will be. But in this artificial society composed entirely of women very near the same age, with similar backgrounds and a similar aim—that of getting an education—the pressure to conform to the value judgments and habits of the majority becomes tremendous.

The egghead is by nature a non-conformist, condemning as it may sound. There is little material security in this economic society for the dancer, the painter, the writer, the teacher; still, those are the professions she wishes to follow. The undergraduate egghead—the future creative artist, educator, stateswoman—is accustomed to the idea of material insecurity; it is simply not of primary importance to her. Other things take precedence. These values are paramount: good government, a well-rounded education, a concrete realization of constitutional rights, and a mind open to the changing aspects of our culture.

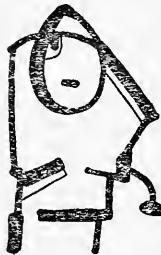
Manifestations of these values may take any number of forms. For instance, the egghead does not go to the library unless she can go into the stacks. She does not go to a movie unless it has sub-titles. She does not visit the Soda Shop, she keeps office hours there. Everything everybody else likes, she hates. She is disdainful of radio, television, historical novels, the Four Aces, Mother's Day, and the Boston Pops. The snob. She adores string quartets, *The New Yorker*, *The Kenyon Review*, creakingly old jazz, modern art, *The Congressional Record*, CORADDI, and the *Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot*. The snob!



Obviously, these comments apply to a minority of eggheads. Somewhere in between this extreme and that of the complete non-egghead lies the great and blessed majority.

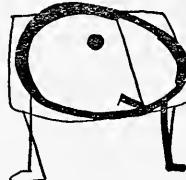
The average egghead, like anyone else, prefers people who like her, have interests similar to hers, and who listen to what she has to say.

Then general public no longer listens to the egghead, who generally, in an attempt to be constructive, has a great deal to say. Hence the colonies. One colony inhabits Aycock, another forms S.D.A., one puts out the *Carolinian*, a fourth dwells among paint pots in the recesses of the Old Library, and a fifth edits CORADDI. And there's the Racket Club at the Music



Building. "Clique" is a naughty word, but the result of a condition which, if undesirable, is inevitable in view of the situation.

So what is to be done about the Average Egghead and the Average Non-Egghead, who don't seem to be at all able to find a common ground? We must admit we do not know. We think it has something to do with the eternal problem of the artist-intellectual in society.



Obviously, the problem of Communication has already reached epic proportions to the detriment of both camps. It is what is preventing an American society from evolving into an American civilization. It amounts to an American tragedy.

## Death in April

(Continued from Page 6)

were gone. But her hair prickled her scalp and her hands could not hold her coat as they walked quietly past the brook and towards the path.

The next several days did not separate themselves in Julie's mind. Tension and strain surrounded them all like widespread wings which refused to fold, only hover in their restlessness. And Julie tried to help them all, not willing to ask help for herself because her grief was for them and her fear was something which could not be spoken or consoled. She was lightness at home with her father and each day she took the path through the woods to Eden's, where Eden would look to her for the freshness which had left her house. Julie did not go to the funeral because her father strangely blamed himself for her reaction to Fritz, the day following his death. Her father felt that he should have told her what Fritz would be like, and in his own worry he had forgotten how young she was, and how little she knew or understood of death. But he required her help, too, coming to expect it in those few days.

Julie saw Fritz' face and hands whenever she was alone, and at night she would awaken to see the coffin floating over her bed. And white wreaths would lie in semi-circles over the floor. Nightmares were new to her and she was more frightened by them than by the visions that followed her during the day. She found herself wanting to escape from everyone's faith in her because it was not true; she was not brave.

"Julie, you've taken all this so well," her father would say to her, the times when they would walk together in the evening. "You've been such a help to us instead of a worry. Thank you, dear." And then Julie would not answer. She would feel a sickness

within her for she knew that what she felt was wrong, and that she behaved well outwardly did not matter.

In the days after the funeral the dogwood blossoms began to flicker over the mountains and the valley around their stream. This was Julie's happiest time of the year because between the springs she always managed to forget how beautiful it would be. Thus, each April was new to her, and she believed as long as she lived she would never lose the joy of the first sight of the white-speckled hills. It was with this partial feeling of joy that Julie came down to breakfast one morning in the first week of April. Her father was sitting at the table finishing his coffee and staring at a piece of sheet music which he held in his left hand.

"Eden brought this over this morning," he said, "She had been clearing things from Fritz' desk and she found this with a pile of papers." He handed the piece of music to Julie. Her fingers were shaking as she read the title on the sheet.

"*The Lonesome Dove*," she murmured. "He found me a copy after all." She studied the page and read Fritz' signature over and over again. It said, "For Julie with affectionate love from Fritz." This was the song which Julie had heard once and loved. It was an old ballad and she remembered asking Fritz if he had ever heard it. He said that he wasn't sure, but that he would try to locate it for her. He had said that a month before, and Julie had forgotten it. As she stared at the music and at her pale, trembling fingers, she felt a warmth start inside her. It began and then swelled into every part of her, vibrating each muscle and touching each particle of skin.

"Daddy, how stupid — how damned, damned stupid." She had almost shouted and her voice seemed to answer her from the dining room and across the terrace as she ran towards the path to Fritz' house. The trees and birds swirled past her, the stone wall

(Continued on Page 24)

# The Day of the Turning

It was May and the Saturdays went 7, 14, 21, 28, like that, like a multiplication table and the boy Morgan marked them as they came. And I am past the fourteenth, and two more, now, are left, he thought, and walked through the shimmering noontime springtime air of the city streets where the traffic surge was a roar, where the naked arms of the girls showed the first warm honey tan of summer. He walked rapidly, carrying his music in a leather case under his arm, and being made of swift and slender bones and not very tall, he cut through the lingering crowds and passed the shops and the cool marbled interiors of old drugstores where powdered women in thin silk sat sipping iced tea at the fountains. He turned the corner where blocks of magazines lay on the sidewalk and where an ancient man with a stump of a leg knelt and held up pencils. Behind his sunglasses, Morgan could watch him. Hello gimp. Old dumb crippled gimp. Hello you old water-eyes, you old cockolorum.

The wide avenue was before him and the tide of glinting cars stretched away, away to where the spires hove in the distant pale green air and the chimneys and he rose above it all being again the Viking giant of his boy dreams and extending his arms away, floated in glimmering space. The crowds and stores and the massing traffic dipped away from him as the world turned on its axis and his giant shadow, black and dread, hung over them like the broad-winged Lucifer. The people below scurried about like mice from the cat-shadow and he grinned and could have blown them all away into the desert if he wanted to.

But the sun went behind a cloud and the wind grew high and brushed his short tufted hair as he stood in the parking lot and could not find the car keys. He'd been pretty good this morning. Waldemeier had been pleased as hell and had almost said so at the end of the lesson in his kraut accent. "You hef not done badt, Morgan. Not too goodt, bot not too badt, eider." Waldemeier, the short dyspeptic man with hands that moved on the keyboard like stubby starfish, had listened over him for two hours this morning, fingering his watch chain and burping. Breathing thickly of brandy, he'd kept leaning past Morgan to wet his thumb and turn the pages of the score, jabbing a fat finger against a dominant seventh. "Vit der tird finger, boy. Lat me hear der tird finger." And Morgan had struck the chord and struck it again and again and Waldemeier gazed at the ceiling and nodded. "Now vunce more. Fromm der top." And when Morgan was through and the walls of the old clangorous room had absorbed the echoes, the old man had stood and nodded some more at him, with a certain fond look about his faded eyes

and all he said was, "Now you work on der fugue und ve go on vit der Bach next time, hah?"

"On vit der Bach, on vit der Bach," Morgan said aloud. And derbach derbach derbach, said the motor of the Oldsmobile, waiting for him to point it out of the city and home.

He had taken a can of beer up to his room and sat on the bed and thought about old Waldemeier and the brandy smell. Poor old lecherous Waldemeier, plastered across a table in some crumby beer garden with his hand up a waitress' leg, saying How's business, sweetheart. And Waldemeier, when they used to call him Heinrich, when he was young, round and flaxen-colored, and wore rimless spectacles and practiced his scales in those musty old conservatories in Leipzig and Vienna. And Waldemeier now, living with some wreck of a hausfrau in a tenement flat where there was oilcloth on the table and thin borscht for supper every night and probably not enough brandy.

In Morgan's room, which was made of white wood and faded sailboat wallpaper, there were eight windows that you could open out like doors. He opened them all to let out the gassy smell of the cleaning fluid Bertie had been using that morning. From outside came the bees' noise and somebody mowing a lawn and he thought he heard the reedy sound of a flute playing "Greensleeves" all out of tune. His room was like a lighthouse or a watchtower with cannon out of the windows and flags stuck up on the roof. When he was a kid he would stand and peer out at the night sky through his mother's opera glasses, looking for enemy bombers. Or he would kneel with his chin on the sill and count the shooting stars. One August, he remembered, when he was twelve, he had counted forty-two. That was the month that he had to get a hundred stars or die. Bertie had said it would bring him good luck to get a hundred stars in one month. And he needed the luck so badly because his first recital was at the end of the month and he had to play "Moment Musicale" by Schubert and he was really scared yellow. He never got more than forty-two, though, and he thought he would have to commit suicide. What a nutty kid he was, come to think of it. And when he was fourteen, he began lessons under H for Heinrich, K for Kurtmann Waldemeier.

He was really a pip, though, Waldemeier was. Like one of those typical professor-type guys in those composer movies. The accent and everything. Morgan thought about what Waldemeier had said that morning, about You hef not done badt, and it reminded him of those technicolor jobs where the young composer is standing, with side burns and all smooth-cheeked and intense as hell, holding a fiddle or something, and the warty, myopic old professor

is saying, "I have nothing more to teach you, my son. Go forth into the world. You will be great, my son, great." Great. Morgan finished his beer. That really killed him.

He rose and went downstairs to the long living room and sat at the piano. His father rested at the far end of the room in a yellow leather chair and the skin of his face seemed tight and awfully close to death. Morgan saw him sitting like that, motionless, staring out at the fresh landscape and in the moment that passed before he stirred and turned, felt his heart stop dead.

He felt his father watching him with no more interest in his glance than if he were a cockroach or something that had gotten in to crawl across the rug. He spread the score on the piano rack and laid his fingers on the keys and saw the keys and his moving fingers gleaming white in the polished mahogany of the piano wood.

"What is that you're working on?" his father asked after a moment as though he had decided privately that he ought to.

"Bach chorale," Morgan said and went on playing.

His father watched him for a time, then stretching out his toe, he drew the leather footstool closer and settled his feet on it, turning again to his view of garden and sky. The dogwood was flowering just beyond the window and the cold delicate whiteness of it spread itself like a dazzling screen behind his father's head.

At first, Morgan thought he could not stand the flowers, the flowers all over the room, quiet and fragrant and the light and his father's still mask of a face. There were more dogwood sprays on the mantel and lilacs spuming out all over the tables and she had even floated those damn pansy faces in a porcelain bowl on the piano. The air was radiant and the lilac smell smothered him like ether in a sick room and he imagined then that he was Chopin, pomaded and tubercular, fingering the lace ends of a nocturne in some dim perfumed salon full of flowers and women. I sometimes have sick fancies, said Miss Havisham drawing her bridal veil down over her cobweb hair yes and she might have known him then. He wore silk underwear and coughed a lot, coughing into a lace handkerchief delicately aside and resuming his music Ladies with your kind indulgence I will now play a nocturne. And the ladies that swooned with the perfume and the moonlight in the sylvan glade and the dryads that rose from behind the trees with pale faces and all around being violet and soft green and dark and enchanted and all prettily done on toes point point point, so. O I am stifling he cried and turned to the open window. But she leaned against his shoulder and trailed her long hair on his arm with the gardenia in her hair. Dream dream of love, my love, O my beloved. My dear beloved.

The front door closed and his mother came in, stripping off her gloves and he jerked his hands from

the keys with a guilty start, realizing that he had been playing away like a damn fool with his head thrown back and his eyes closed. It must have been the beer. Oh you damn fool. He hated it when he would be doing that, playing Chopin or some corny fairy music like that, acting all over the place and practically going into a swoon and then somebody would walk in. Especially if it were his mother. She came over to where he sat at the piano and gave his head a gentle shove. "Hi, handsome," she said. She was wearing her mink collar that he liked because it was the exact color of her hair.

She was sort of breathless, "Well. Chopin, hmm? I heard you playing outside." She started across the room, unfastening the collar. "Don't stop. Go on."

Morgan began the *Nocturne in E Flat* with the soft pedal way down. Really, it was corny. It practically bored him. His mother was standing off from the mantel, studying the effect of the dogwood as though it were a window display, and absently patting her hair with one hand. His father had turned his head and was looking at her in that same dispirited and out-of-focus way he had looked at Morgan earlier. She sat on the arm of the wing chair, spreading her suit skirt evenly about her, and began sifting through the mail. "Perfectly gorgeous day," she remarked in a distracted tone. "People downtown are maniacs, all of them. That furniture bill. Thought I'd paid it." She looked toward her husband as though for affirmation. He said nothing. She put down the stack of mail and went over to where he sat. "And how are you feeling?"

"I'm feeling fine," he said. "Just fine."

She stood watching him for a long moment. Morgan felt his fingers tense on the keys. They were looking straight at each other.

She took a cigarette out of the little box on the end table. To get it, she had to kind of lean past him. He did not move. He did not even hand her the lighter. He just sat there. Morgan stopped playing. He could feel the muscles of his shoulders beginning to tighten and ache. And who felt like fiddling with this recital hall crap, anyway. He got up and went and flung himself into the sofa near the radiator, instantly burned his elbow on the blasted thing and said, "Ouch, goddamn it." They even had the heat on in the middle of summer, practically. Can you beat it?

His mother was saying to his father, "Did you take the pill?"

"I took the pill," he said.

"When?"

"At twelve o'clock, just like it says on the label." His voice was as weak and patient and unsteady as he was. "At nine and twelve and six. Each day and every day. Nine and twelve and—"

"Oh, for goodness' sake, stop complaining. If you did what Lubin told you to do in the first place, you wouldn't be like this now."

"I'm not complaining," he said and turned his face away. "I never complain."

"You need a vacation."

"Sure, sure," he said and nodded. "A vacation. Sure." He kept nodding his head as though it amused him mightily.

"When we going to the Pier, first week in June?" Morgan wanted to know from across the room. He pressed the backs of his hands to his forehead with the fingers locked and, looking through the fingers close before his eyes like the slats of a fence, he could see his mother standing against the great window and the whiteness outside.

"We are going if and when your father gets around to deciding," she said.

"We are going"—his father's voice came loudly—"just as soon as I can get away."

"Lubin said you should have gone down there three weeks ago," she said.

"Lubin's a fool."

"You're the fool, I think," she said to him. "You're the fool."

Through his fingers, Morgan watched her come across the room towards him.

"Well, how was Waldemeier today?" She sat down on the sofa beside him. "The old fox."

"Fine," he said and yawned. "Liked the Bach."

"The Bach? Did he? Oh, you mean that old tape-worm stuff you've been working on all week."

"Yes, Dolly. That's the stuff. 'Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring,' Tapeworm No. 147, by J. S. Bach." He laughed. She really could be ignorant sometimes.

*T a p e w o r m* and Fugue in C minor. Now that is the most apt comment from the ranks of the uninitiated. I've heard in a long time. Jesus. I can hear old J. S. churning in his grave now."

"Don't swear, Morgan. I don't like that. I don't like that at all. And don't call me 'Dolly'."

"Why not, Dolly?" He gave her a playful little sock on the shoulder. "I like it, Dolly."

"Mother," she cor-

rected him.

"Dolly," he said.

"Mother," she said.

"Dolly," he said. She turned away a bit and gave him this sideways look out of the corners of her eyes.

His father got up slowly and started out of the room with the afternoon paper.

"Would you like some dinner?" she called to him. He shook his head.

"How about some soup? I'll have Bertie fix you some vegetable soup."

"No soup," he said and went upstairs.

"What's the matter, Dolly?" He gave her another little sock.

"Oh now stop that, Morgan. I mean it." She got up, brushing tobacco crumbs from her skirt, and turned on the table lamp.

"Oh, you're so cute when you're mad, Dolly." He was being playful as the devil. She turned off the lamp and crushed out her cigarette. But she was good-looking. She really was. When she got decked out with mascara and perfume in her hair and wearing those filthy scarves and lots of heavy jewelry, she was the best-looking woman he knew.

How she looked last week he thought he would remember the rest of his life. It was the morning of his graduation and they had stood in the courtyard outside the Frost Memorial at old Phillips-Frost with Merridew, the headmaster. She was wearing this big white wheel of a hat that stuck out around her face about two feet and that old buzzard Merridew was practically knocking himself out being a charmer. Which was really pretty much of a strain for him, considering. And the way those other hotshots had been gawking, you'd think she was the Queen of Sheba under glass, or something. He could take her anywhere and the same thing would happen. He guessed he could take her anywhere.

So he sat there and grinned at her until the vexed line of her mouth eased and she gave him a halfway grudging smile. "Are you going to be very busy tonight?" she inquired.

"Got a date."

"Oh?" She was leaning casually against the piano. "You didn't tell me." He let it pass.

"With C. B.?"

He shrugged. "Who else?"

"It seems to me," she said, coming and standing over him with her hands on her hips, "It seems to me that this business with Miss Carmel Bayliss Dunn is growing into the biggest affair of the century."

"Jealous?" His grin was pretty maddening, really.

"You bet I am," she said and he gave a great guffaw and pulled her down roughly on the sofa beside him.

"Miss Carmel Bayliss Dunn means nothing to me," he told her in a deep and impassioned voice. "She is—she is a mere play-toy, an evening's diversion." And he dismissed the issue with an airy wave of his hand. Smooth as the devil himself, boy.

"Ah, but I'll bet she arouses you," she continued in the same mock-fervent tone. "I'll bet she brings out the beast in you. Tell me. Tell me, does she?"

"Oh, Dolly, how you do go on," he said gently. There was a silence, then, and they remained looking into each other's eyes. Sometimes it was hard for him to decide whether she was kidding or not. It really was embarrassing, sometimes.



by Polly Swope

He did not like his mother to know too much about C. B. It was unethical or something. He never knew quite what it was about C. B. that got him, though, because she certainly wasn't good-looking. She had kind of too many teeth, for one thing, and she wore her hair all skinned back from her face and hanging down the back of her neck like a goddamn horse's tail, and she walked like a boy and she always sounded as though she were talking against a high wind. And she loved movies. So he didn't really know what it was, unless it was that she was never ever phony, like some girls were, and that she was always so *clean*, like some girls weren't.

He guessed they would go to some crummy movie tonight. The last time, he had taken her to see some antique Jean Harlow picture and it was putrid, but there was one part he liked. There was Jean Harlow and this guy who played her husband and they were sitting on the bed and he kept trying to tell her something but she kept leaning over and kissing him and saying "I love that cute little nose," and stuff like that. It sounds mushy as hell to tell about it, and he never told anyone about it, not even C. B., but he liked that in the movie. The part C. B. liked—he could have almost guessed it—was this fancy technical effect where they had a clinch in front of a kind of glass fountain and the camera pointed through the water at the couple doing this mad clinch and the picture came all over hazy and out-of-focus. That was what C. B. liked. She had god-awful taste, sometimes.

Morgan's watch said a quarter to five. He decided he would have to give old C. B. a buzz before long. Outside, in the lengthening afternoon, the sunlight was still bright and they heard the noise of the freshening wind and the rattle of the dogwood branches at the window. He reached up to where the small radio was stuck in the corner of a shelf and turned its knob. Some tremendous orchestra, a philharmonic or something, was playing, with all the strings and brasses in the world, "I Can't Give You Anything But Love, Baby." They had it all mellowed and elegant and full of harps and mutes and all, as though it were Tchaikovsky, for God's sake. Morgan said, "Oh brother," and snapped the thing off. Stuff like that could really gripe him.

That was when it all really began. The whole mess. All of a sudden his mother sat up and gripped his arm as though she'd gotten this terrific idea.

"My God, Morgan, I almost forgot," she said. "Wait til you hear what happened." She was all excited all of a sudden. "You remember that man I told you about, that Mr. Perry I met at the club?"

For a minute, his mind drew a blank.

"You know," she persisted. "Mr. Perry, that nice man from the radio station."

Oh God, he remembered now. He might have known she'd remember.

"Well, I met him in the elevator in Webb's today. You know, they have the radio studio on the top floor.

And do you know what he said?" Her eyes were shining in a helluva peculiar way, as though it were a struggle, as though she knew he already knew what she was going to say and he didn't like it. "He said he could give you a fifteen-minute spot once a week for the whole summer. Isn't that marvelous, Morgan? The whole summer!"

All he said was, "But I thought we were going to the Pier."

"Well, but we are, dear. We are. We can go down on weekends, dear. We—"

"I thought this year we were going down for the whole summer," he said.

"Morgan, dear, listen. This is a wonderful opportunity. Aren't you excited? Think what you could do."

She was talking to him as though he were a kid or a moron, for God's sake. He remembered it all, now. "Well, what could I do?" He wasn't even trying to sound pleasant.

"Darling, your music. You'd have a whole program to yourself. They'll even give you an announcer. Mr. Perry said you could even announce the numbers yourself, if you wanted to."

Perry. Of all the conceited phonies. Him and that MG he runs all over the city and those little round Ivy League collars he wears, and all those horsey blondes, for God's sake. Some taste. The way he sports all over the studio, wearing headphones and flipping his fingers at people, you'd think he owned the whole goddamn network. And if she thought he was going to sit up there while that ass flipped his fingers at *him*, she was dead wrong.

"Mom, listen," he said, trying to sound calm. "We went through this whole thing before. I thought I told you."

"Oh, well, I know, dear," she went on. "But that was months ago. Now you've got the whole summer, and it pays just beautifully, and it would be marvelous training."

"Training! Training for what? What in hell would I play, finger exercises?" His voice began shaking a little, in spite of himself. He jumped up and stamped over to the window. "My God, what they want is lousy dinner music. Goddamn hotshot Cole Porter crap, that's what they want."

"It pays beautifully," she said again.

"So it pays! So my God, what do you want me to do the rest of my life. Sit at a lousy ivory piano on a revolving platform the rest of my life? Oh, it would be great, all right. Some real dandy palace with spotlights and drunks all over the tables. Oh, I could really give them the schmaltz then. Maybe I could even sing. I could be a goddamn troubadour. And you'd come in wearing a corsage two feet long and they'd give you a ringside table and—"

"Morgan!" She really hit the ceiling then. "Stop exaggerating and stop swearing. You don't have to

do a thing you don't want to do. Let's get that straight first, shall we?"

He stood there like an idiot, gazing into that damn white tree. He did not even have to turn around to see that she was pale, but very calm. She never really got mad. She just kind of turned to ice.

"You've got the whole summer, Morgan. I'd think twice if I were you before I wasted it."

He shut his eyes until he saw bright orange. "Mom, I don't want it. I don't want to do it the whole summer or even part of the summer or anytime at all. I'm sorry, Mom. But I have other plans."

"Other plans? You never told me about any other plans."

He thought if he could just explain it without irritating her any more, it would be all right. He came back and sat down again on the sofa.

"I thought I might get a job down at the Pier," he said. "I thought as long as we were going down, I'd get a job there. So I talked to Wilcox about it because his family's got a summer cottage down there, and asked him did he know of any jobs there." He could not tell from her expression what she thought.

"So it seems Wilcox has got this job lined up with the construction company down there. They're building this new casino out over the water and they're tearing up ground for a parking lot and they need a lot of extra help. He said they're using guys our age and that he could get me a job lined up with them if I wanted to. So I told him yes."

She said nothing.

"And the pay's good and the hours aren't bad and it'll be outdoors," he added.

"Now just exactly what will you be doing?" she asked. "Digging ditches?"

"Well—why not?"

She shook her head and shifted around on the sofa, looking for another cigarette. "No, dear. I'm sorry. You've never done that sort of thing before."

"Well, my God, Mom, you don't have to be experienced, you know."

"I don't care, Morgan. I don't approve of that sort of thing. It's common and unclean labor."

"But Wilcox is doing it. So are fifty million other guys. It's O. K. for them."

"Well, it's not O. K. for you." She was beginning to get mad again. "And besides, what about your hands?"

"My hands?"

"Dear, *you* have to be careful of your hands. Wilcox doesn't. You just can't go around tearing up dirt and cement and filth all summer."

"Oh, for Pete's sake, Mom. What do you think I am, a lily?" His *hands*, for crying out loud. How corny can you get.

"Nevertheless, Morgan, I'll have to say no. And stop shouting."

"But Mom—"

"I said no, Morgan."

His father came in with his hair all rumpled as though he'd been lying down. He went over and turned on the table lamp.

"I was going to leave that off," she said.

He looked over at her and then turned it off. "It's all right with me," he said, more to himself than to her. "It doesn't matter to me at all." He turned to go out again and kind of lost his balance for a minute and grabbed onto the chair back. Then he went quickly outside by the patio door and into the garden. To check the talisman roses again, thought Morgan. They won't be out for another goddamn month.

She found a cigarette and lit it. "Besides," she went on, "We most likely won't get down to the Pier at all except on weekends. You know your father."

Morgan sat with his hand pressed against his head and stared at the patterns in the rug. He felt as if a great weight had suddenly clamped down on his brain. All my life, all my life, he thought.

"So now you just call Wilcox and tell him you're sorry but you can't take the job."

"He's already down there."

"Well, write him a letter. That won't be too hard, will it? Morgan?"

He did not answer.

"Look, dear, Mr. Perry said he'd call about seven o'clock to find out whether or not you want it. Will you talk to him, dear?"

"No."

"Now, Morgan."

"Because if I do, I'll tell him to go to hell," he said.

After that there was a long silence. Then she reached over and ran her cool fingers over his short, stiff hair. "Dear, why don't you let your hair grow again? Remember how handsome and wavy it used to be? I loved it that way."

He finally got away after dinner and went upstairs and took a shower. His room was full of chilly air from all the windows he'd opened that afternoon, but he didn't close any. The hands of the little clock on his desk pointed to five minutes to seven. He had forgotten to phone C. B. after all. But she would be waiting for him anyway, smelling of complexion soap and wearing around forty-five junky bracelets.

He brushed his teeth and ran a wet comb over his haircut. Then he put off all the lights in his room and stood at the open window in his underwear. Far out across the gabled roofs and the tops of the trees lay the haze of city lights, and above, the on-off pinpoint flashings of the radio tower. He fastened his gaze upon it and all the sky that he could see within the circle of his eye glowed red from it. An arc away, the pallid moon turned her cracked face upon him in wonder.

It is astonishing, she said to him. It is astonishing that there should be so much disenchantment.

I never really knew, he said. I just found out today.

*translated from the Japanese by Yoko Ishikawa*

## A LUMP OF SOIL

*by Akutagawa Ryunosuke*

Osumi's son, Jintaro, died just before the tealeaf-picking season. He had been sick in bed for nearly eight years now, so Osumi's feelings were not only those of sorrow. Indeed, as she sat in front of her son's coffin, offering incense at the funeral, a wave of feeling, not unlike that of sudden relief, swept over her, and she was almost content.

But after the funeral the question remained of the disposal of her daughter-in-law, Tama. It was the general rule that the widow should return to her father's home, since the death of the husband left no reason for her to remain living with her husband's family. Tama and Jintaro had a son who would, of course, have to remain with Osumi. But also, all during Jintaro's illness, Tama had been working the farm almost single-handed. To return Tama to her home meant that old Osumi would have the care of the child and the farming — it was an impossibility! Osumi thought that as soon as the 'forty-ninth day' of mourning was over, she would try to persuade Tama to marry some one of her kin so that she might go on living with her. She thought of her nephew, Yokichi, as a possible candidate.

Such was the situation. So after the first period of mourning was over, when Tama was cleaning up the house, and went on with her work as usual, Osumi was naturally greatly surprised that she made no move to leave. She sat in the sun-warmed verandah that ran along the front of the house, teasing the boy with a flowering cherry branch that she had picked from a nearby school yard.

"Tama," said Osumi, "I guess I should've talked about it with ye before now. But do ye mean to leave me and the child and go back to yer folks?" She was almost pleading. But Tama didn't even look at her. She only chuckled and mumbled "What are ye talking about?" But with that chuckle Osumi felt as if a great load were lifted from her chest. She was suddenly talkative. "Ye wouldn't leave us now would ye? Ye wouldn't leave a poor lone woman and a little babe with nobody at all to care for them. A poor old woman who has to live beyond her husband and son, all alone in the world." As she talked, she began to feel sorry for herself, and for the cruel hard world she had to live in. Tears began to roll down her wrinkled cheeks and on to the cherry blossoms which she threw from her.

"Yes, yes," Tama said, "If ye don't mind, I'd always like being here.—I've got this child. Why should I want to go?"

Tama's eyes too began to fill with tears. She bent over and lifted the little boy to her knees. Hiroji, unused to attention, looked shy, and he was worried about the branch of cherry blossoms that was thrown

down on the dirty mats of the room within.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tama continued to work as she had done while her husband had been ill. But the problem of getting a second husband was not so easily solved. Tama showed no interest at all in it. Osumi brought up the problem and various prospects on all occasions and tried to persuade Tama to make up her mind. But always Tama would reply, "Oh well, next year, perhaps," and would refuse to talk further. This was not unpleasant to Osumi, but at the same time it worried her. What would the neighbours say? Ah, well, she should wait until next year, she decided.

But when the year changed, Tama still didn't seem to think of anything else but the farming. Osumi brought up the subject of remarriage with renewed energy. Perhaps the chief reason was that she was afraid of the talk of her neighbors and relatives.

"Ye can't go on without a man at yer young age," she said.

"It's no use talking like that," Tama said. "Imagine having a stranger in the house. It wouldn't be good for Hiro. Ye wouldn't be comfortable. And I, too, would have an extra thing to worry about."

Osumi sighed. "That's why I want you to marry Yokichi. He's no stranger. I hear that he's left off gambling these days, too."

"Well he might be a member of the family to ye, but he's same as a stranger to me. I will bear it alone."

"But the bearing isn't for only one or two years."

"Oh, it doesn't matter," Tama said. "It's all for Hiro. If only I work hard enough, now, the land won't have to go a stranger's hand and will go completely to Hiro."

"But the neighbors talk so, Tama," and always when Osumi came to this part she would lower her voice to a whisper. "They don't think ye're maybe bearing it alone . . . I wish ye would tell the neighbors the same thing ye tell me."

Such conversations were repeated over and over between the two. But Tama's resolution seemed not to weaken but to get stronger each time. "For Hiro," she always said. She planted the potatoes, and reaped the wheat, without borrowing anybody's hand. She even went on to keep a milch cow in summer. And once, she cut the grass in a storm. Since she was doing all this work herself, it was as if she were insisting no husband was necessary. In the end, Osumi gave up trying to get a son-in-law. And she was, in a way, pleased with the idea of giving up. She tried to express her gratitude for such a hard-working daughter as Tama by doing her part of the work—the house-keeping—as best as she could. There was plenty to be done—looking after her grandson, feeding the

cows, cooking and washing, getting water from a neighboring well—but Osumi did not mind and moved her small bent old body busily around the house.

One autumn evening, Tama came in later than her custom, with a huge bundle of fuel on her back. Osumi, with Hiro strapped on her back, was just crouching down in front of the bath to light the fire.

"It must be awful cold out tonight," she muttered. "And ye are late."

"I worked a little more than usual."

Tama threw down the bundle of fuel on the hearth, and without troubling to take her muddy sandals off, she sat down by the fire. In the fire place, a huge chunk of wood was slowly licking out its tongue-like flame. Osumi looked at Tama and hastily tried to stand, but with the child on her back it was not easy. With an effort she came to her feet, holding onto the edge of the bathtub for support.

"Come and take yer bath," she said. "It will be warm in a minute."

"I'd rather eat than bathe," said Tama. "I want some potatoes; I hope they're cooked."

Osumi hobbled to the sink and got the pan full of potatoes she had cooked for supper, and brought it to the fireside.

"It's been cooked and waiting long, and it's almost cold by now," she said.

They each stuck bamboo sticks into the potatoes and began to warm them by the fire.

"Hiro's fast asleep. Why don't ye put him down?" said Tama.

"It's awfully cold tonight," Osumi said. "He would not sleep alone on the mat."

Tama began biting into the potatoes, even while they were talking. She ate in a way that only hard-working labourers do. She pulled the potato off the bamboo stick and into her mouth in one movement; it was swallowed in one gulp. Osumi carefully browned her potato over the fire, feeling the warm weight of the softly-snoring child on her back the while.

"Ye must be extra hungry after the work ye do," she said.

She gazed on her daughter-in-law with eyes of admiration. But Tama silently attacked the potatoes in the flickering light of the oil lamp.

Tama continued to do a man's job in the fields. She sometimes went out even at night with a lamp in her hand to inspect the growing turnips. Osumi

felt reverence for this daughter, but perhaps it was turning into a kind of fear. Tama left the housework completely to Osumi. Nowadays she didn't even wash her underwear. Osumi did not complain, but went on working her bent frail body with all her might. Whenever she met the old woman next door, she would say, "I've got no worries at all, ye know. With my daughter like that, I can leave the world at any time. There's no worry at all about the house." And she would earnestly sing her daughter-in-law's praises.

As another year went by, Tama began talking about working the mulberry fields across the river which they lent to other people, herself. She said that to lease the land on only a ten-yen farm-rent was like throwing good money away. It was much wiser to grow mulberry trees and keep silkworms, she said for unless there was a great change in the silk market, she was sure that she could get at least a hundred yen a year. But however much money there was to be got, Osumi could not bear to think of more work, much less the busy tending of silkworms. She protested nervously.

"Oh, Tama, don't you mistake me. I don't mean that I'm not co-operating with ye, I mean to do my best. But though I'm trying, ye see, we've no men-folk in the house, we've got the baby, and it's sort of too much even now. Ye don't think we can manage silkworms above this, do ye? Think of me a bit."

Seeing her mother-in-law in tears, Tama did not insist. However, although she gave up the idea of keeping silkworms, she stubbornly insisted on keeping up the mulberry fields. "I don't care," she said coldly, looking at Osumi; "It's me that's going to do the work, anyway."

Osumi again began to think of taking in a son-in-law. The last time she had wanted one as a means of keeping Tama in her home without the neighbors' gossip, but this time it was her only hope of escaping the back-breaking work of keeping house. In that sense, her want of a son-in-law was much more painfully strong.

So, just at the time when plum-flowers in the back yard began to put forth their blossoms, Osumi tried again. She was sitting in front of the lamp, with huge turtle-rimmed sewing glasses on, employed in the task of making the socks last a little longer.

"Don't ye have any intentions of getting another husband?" she asked. But Tama, sitting in front of the fire and munching salted peas, said shortly, "The same story again? Oh, do be quiet," and would not even listen. Formerly, Osumi would have given up. Not this time—this time she persevered. "But, Tama, ye can't go on saying that. Think of tomorrow. It's our turn to dig the grave at Miyashita's funeral, ye know. What are we to do when we don't have a man in the family . . .?"

"It don't matter, I'll go and dig."

"Ye! A woman!"



And Osumi tried to laugh, but seeing her daughter-in-law's face she suddenly felt that she couldn't.

Tama said, "Ye don't mean to say that ye want to live an easier life now, do you?"

Sitting in front of the fire with her knees open in front of her, she was coldly deliberate. The thrust was so direct and sudden that without even thinking Osumi removed her great big spectacles. She couldn't tell why she had done it, and held them in her hand.

"An easier life?" she asked. "Oh, no. How could I?" The lie was hot on her tongue.

"I hope ye haven't forgotten what ye said when Hiro's father died," Tama said. "Ye swore ye had to keep yer ancestor's land from going out of the family."

"Yes, yes, certainly I did, but think! Everything changes as conditions change. There's no helping it."

Osumi pleaded and argued the necessity of having a man in the family. But her argument wasn't convincing, even to her own ears. It was all because she couldn't tell her real reason—that she did want to live an easier life.

Tama munched on her salted peas and went on.

"Oh, it's all right for ye, of course, ye're not going to live very long. But if ye was in my shoes, ye wouldn't be able to grumble like that. I'm not being a virtuous widow for the sake of show or village honor. When my bones hurt after a work at night, I sometimes wonder about things like that. But I tell myself that this is all for the sake of the family, it's for Hiro, and I goad myself on."

Vacantly, Osumi watched her daughter-in-law's face. As she watched, a conviction slowly began to form in her mind. It was the fact that, whatever she might try to do, however much she may suffer, she would never be able to live an easy life. When Tama finally got silent, Osumi put on her big spectacles again. And as if in conclusion, she mumbled, "But Tama, the world doesn't work to reason, and I wish ye'd think things over again. I won't say anything more now."

Tama was silent and lay herself heavily down on the mat. Twenty minutes later, one of the young men of the village passed in front of the house, singing a song to himself.

*The young widow's out reaping again,  
Whiz goes the sickle,  
Down goes the wheat!*

When the sound of the song died away, Osumi ventured a glance at Tama, but Tama just lay long on the mat and yawned.

"I guess we ought to get some sleep," Osumi said, with a sigh. "We've got to get up early."

Tama sat up and took a handful of salted beans.

\* \* \* \* \*

Osumi suffered in silence for the next few years. Her suffering was exactly like that of an old horse that has been put under the same yoke with a young eager mare. Tama continued her work outside in the

fields. Osumi, too, to all appearances, worked both patiently and diligently about the house. But an invisible shadow seemed to be haunting her all the time. Because she had not heated the bathing water, or because she had forgotten to dry the rice, or because she had let the cow get loose, Tama's sharp tongue was continuously scolding her. Osumi no longer tried to talk back. For one thing, it was because she was used to endure suffering, but for another thing, she felt that her grandson, Hiroji, loved her better than he loved his own mother, and this was an increasing comfort to her. Hence Osumi didn't change outwardly at all. If she did change, it was in the fact that she did not praise her daughter-in-law as much as she had used to. Nobody noticed such small difference in her. To the old woman next door, she was still the 'pious old Osumi'.

One summer afternoon, Osumi sat with the old woman beneath the grapeshelf that made a convenient shadow in front of the barn. There was nothing to be heard but the buzzing of flies in the cowshed. The old woman next door smoked short cigarette butts in the pauses between their talks. The butts were what she had diligently saved from what her son left around.

"Where is Tama?" said the old woman. "Cutting grass again. I declare, she works like no one I've ever seen before."

"Oh well, maybe," Osumi said, "But housework is what a young woman was meant to do."

"It's a good thing she likes farming, if you're asking me. My son's wife has been in the family for seven years already, and she don't even try to keep her own patch free from weeds. She's got to sew her kimonos, she's got to wash the children's clothes from morning to night. That's how she lives . . ."

"I think that's much better," said Osumi. "If there's nothing to hope for in this world, we might as well make it pleasant by fixing ourselves up a little and be tidy at least."

"Well, it's not an easy task to weed the cornfields in the blazing sun when one's young, I guess."

And the two old women argued their point.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was eight years now since Jintaro's death. Tama's name began gradually to spread abroad, beyond the boundaries of the village. She was the model widow. She was the holy example of a virtuous woman. "Learn a little from Tama-san," folks would say. Whenever mothers scolded their daughters, Tama's example was used. Osumi dared not complain openly of her sufferings even to her old friends. Somewhere in her heart she had had faith in the justice of the earth. But that faith gradually faded away. Now, all she could hope in was her grandson, Hiroji. Osumi put her love, heart and soul, on her Hiro. But even this last hope was threatened.

One autumn afternoon, Hiro, with a satchel full of books slapping against his legs, came running home from school. Osumi was sitting in front of the barn peeling the sour persimmons that were to be dried and sweetened in the sun. Hiro jumped over the persimmons, clicked his heels together, and gave a salute to his grandmother. Then, without ado, he earnestly asked, "Granny, is my mother very good?"

Osumi stopped her peeling, and stared at the boy. "Why?" she asked.

Hiro was frowning. "Well, the teacher said, this morning at school, that my mother was the best woman in this neighbourhood."

"The teacher said . . ."

"Yes, the teacher. Is it true, Granny?"

Osumi was too confused to answer directly. She bent her head. So! Even the boy was to be taught the lie! Suddenly, her confusion changed to rage—to madness. She rose to her feet and began to curse Tama for the first time.

"Of course it's not true!" she screamed. "It's a lie! That's what it is, a lie. That woman, she may be good outside, yes, she works and acts as if she's good, but in her soul she is wicked. She neglects her son—she scolds her poor old mother and uses her as she pleases! Her temper . . ."

Hiro was astonished and he stared up at his grandmother. Then Osumi, in reaction, began to shed big hot tears.

"So," she sobbed. "Hiro, all my hopes are on you. Ye musn't forget that, Hiro. When ye are seventeen, you must get a neat little wife, and let yer old granny rest a bit. Listen, Hiro, you've got to treat me well. And I'll do whatever I can for ye, too. I'll give ye everything I've got."

"Will ye give me those persimmons when they sweeten, too?"

Osumi laughed. "Of course, of course. Though ye're a little boy, you understand well. Now, don't ye forget."

Osumi continued to laugh in small gasps, while tears rolled down her cheeks.

The next night, Osumi had a big quarrel with Tama. It began from nothing at all—just that Osumi had eaten what was supposed to be Tama's share of potatoes. As both their tempers rose and they began to talk loudly, Tama said very coldly, "If ye don't want to work anymore, you might as well die."

Then Osumi began to rave. Hiro was sleeping peacefully on her lap, but she roughly shook him awake.

"Wake up, Hiro, wake up," she cried. "Wake up and listen to what yer mother says to me. Yer mother says I ought to die! Do ye hear? Yer mother says I ought to die. Oh, yes . . . Perhaps our fortune has increased since she has come. But all our land was opened by me and your grand-daddy. And what does she say to me? She says to me that if I want to lead

an easy life I might as well die . . . Tama, you want me to die! And I will die, too. I'm not afraid of dying. No, no. I'm not going to listen to ye any longer. I'll die. Of course I'll die. I'll die. But I'll curse ye all through yer years!"

Thus Osumi raved, and held on to Hiro who had now waked and begun to cry, too. But Tama lay like a log in front of the fire and didn't seem to heed anything that went on.

\* \* \* \*

However, Osumi did not die. Instead, a few months later, Tama died, after ailing for only eight days. It was typhoid fever. There were several cases of typhoid in the small village that year. Tama had gone grave-digging for one of the victims just before she had got it. "Ye must have got it at that time," Osumi told the red-faced patient after the doctor left.

On Tama's funeral day it was raining. But all the village, including the Village Head, came to the funeral. And everybody that came regretted Tama's early death, and consoled Osumi for her misfortune in losing the pillar of her family. The Village Head spoke to Osumi of how they had planned to honor Tama for her work in the family. Osumi could do nothing but silently bow. "You have to accept your fate and be resigned, Osumi-san," said the Head. "We have been doing our best since last year, to get Tama-san officially honored. It's fate. It's fate. We have all got to resign ourselves."

The night after the funeral, Osumi, with Hiro, slept in the inner room in front of the family altar. Usually they went to sleep in complete darkness, but tonight there was the red glow of incense from the altar. The mats still smelled of antiseptic acids. Osumi could not go to sleep. Tama's death had certainly brought her considerable happiness. She wouldn't have to work anymore. There was no fear of getting scolded. She had a little fortune in the bank. She still had the fields. She could eat white rice with her grandson every day if she wanted to. She could buy

her favourite salted salmon by the sack if she wanted to. She had never felt more relieved in her life. More relieved? She suddenly remembered the night that her son died; that was nine years ago. She remembered the feeling of relief she had felt as she sat in front of the coffin. He was her only son. And tonight was the night of the funeral of her daughter-in-law, the mother of her only grandson.

She opened her eyes. The boy was sound asleep beside her. As she watched his innocent, upturned face she began to feel more and more wretched. She thought of Jintaro, her son, and of Tama, as wretched, pitiable people that had had the misfortune to be her kin.

This change in her feelings swept away all the hatred and anger of the past nine years. It even swept away all the happiness she had been feeling for

(Continued on Page 18)

## *a song of solomon*

This spring was paved with love and gold  
In wood of Lebanon, with wheeling garlands  
On the lemon trees, red floating Judas.  
The spikenard grew up from the trembling earth  
With dignity and lifted fragrant head  
Among the striped pepper grasses.  
This spring  
Was paved with love in memory.

We planned the diggings in the pepper grass  
And planted a geranium.

Solomon built for the idle daughters, paving  
With love and silver this new house of spring  
And rare and yellow oils rubbed in the leather doors  
And dark obsidian  
Studded the beams of Lebanon  
Held up by walls of love.

We dug the pepper grass all spring together  
Not in silence, which were safe and fitting,  
But in talk of weeds and wood ashes and other  
Fertilizer. And found the seed and planted it.  
It grew among the pepper grasses and may  
Bloom next spring.

Love is not a bartered thing, to take and give  
But only giving, and should be  
Kept so. And if Solomon did love  
The idle daughters, built for them with wood of  
Lebanon  
And paved this spring with love in memory  
His love was only giving  
And we were most unwise to dig the pepper grasses.  
Geraniums do not grow for love of growing  
But must be teased and pampered  
And brought in when winter comes.  
And we dug up the pepper grass  
And planted a geranium.

Next spring will be bright and paved with love  
And trembling and Lebanon and lemon green  
And we will keep our flower pot at home  
And set it in the window.

*Virginia Jane Harris*

## *the early birth*

January was false this year,  
Surrendering a day to fibre-stirring warmth:  
Birth pangs of a wild, precocious Spring  
Impatient to be born.

We shuddered quietly, huddled in the snow,  
Struggling to preserve our specious warmth  
And waited numbly, knowing without words  
The Cycle would move in its accustomed path  
And birth would be accomplished.

In the last hours of March we waited,  
Reaching out to hold in photographic grip  
Each loved moment, relics of another time.  
Clinging carefully to each chill wind,  
We wept to see the wind's betrayal,  
Stirring memories of an old love  
Once safe beneath the leaves.

The oak, gentle patriarch of many births,  
Tried to prepare us by forsaking haste,  
But the clarion cherry trumpeted the birth,  
Laughing to scorn our fools' attempts  
To scare away the first impetuous robin.

And fools we were,  
Knowing they could not know  
The snow's inviolate keeping  
Of our dreams entombed  
Made relics of another year the last.  
Birth-sadness was not wanton sacrilege,  
But secret grief for unwept winters past.

*Janet S. Fyne*

## *A Lump of Soil*

*(Continued from Page 17)*

the future. She felt that among them all she who was still living on in this world, was the most wretched. "Tama, why did ye die?" Unconsciously, she was talking to the new member in the family altar. Tears blinded her. At last, she slept for exhaustion, but by that time, the thatched roof of the house was already visible against the gray morning sky.

## Jesse Adams' House Cat

Jesse Adams was tying his tie at the bureau mirror when his wife called up to him that breakfast was ready.

"Hurry, dear, the eggs will get cold and you have to write that excuse for Janey and I have some news for you."

Jesse once again praised the powers that be for his wife's faultless diction. Anything less than her perfect enunciations and his life would have been a series of frustrations not unlike those experienced by soap opera enthusiasts during an electric storm. Jesse's appreciation of his wife's daily news bulletin stemmed from the fact that they enabled him to organize his day before he ever descended the steps in the morning. He knew whether he was going to the club for dinner and could check his white shirt supply; he could fill his pen with ink for the household check; and he could, as in this case, practice his severest frown for the benefit of Janey, who had failed a spelling test for the sixth straight time. Jesse did not feel that spelling was one of the essential arts, being himself one who had always referred to the heavenly spirits as a-n-g-l-e-s. Nevertheless, Big Jane, as he affectionately termed his wife, insisted that Janey improve her record at school. He frowned more severely than ever into the mirror, then smiled. That one was indeed fearful. He did not see how anyone under the age of sixteen could fail to be terrified by it. He gave his tie a final pat and picked up his brief case from the chair. On the way downstairs he reflected that his wife had mentioned some news she had for him. This was a disturbing note. Anything that could not be broadcast over the stairwell system was usually unspeakable in the literal sense of the word. Jesse did not feel up to any world-shaking disclosures this morning. A well-developed frown was enough to ask of any man at eight o'clock on a rainy day.

He clumped down on the last step and dropped his brief case on the hall table.

"Where are we eating this morning?"

"In the kitchen, dear. It's Lottie's day off."

Jesse did not particularly like to eat in the kitchen. It wasn't that he was proud. It was just that it was difficult to concentrate on eating with all of the animals on the floor at his feet. The Adams household was not unique in the number of pets that it included, it simply delegated more power to them than other pet-owners felt absolutely necessary. Jesse found it difficult to eat in their presence because they had a way of making him remember that he was grossly well-fed, like the posters of the hungry orphans across the sea. He noticed as he sat at the table that Big Jane had set a saucer of milk before each greedy

muzzle. He relaxed in his chair and drank his orange juice.

"I put some paper by your place, Jess. Janey has to leave for school in two minutes flat."

Janey receded visibly in her chair and Jesse felt a wave of pity cut through him almost making him neglect his frown, but Big Jane had evidently been practicing one of her own for his benefit. He took out his pen.

"Well, young lady, do we have to go thru this every week?" He frowned.

"No, Daddy."

"This is the sixth week, you know." This frowning business was very tiring.

"Yes, Daddy."

"You'll have to work harder." He did not really feel that working harder would help. You were either born to be a speller or you were not. He could not help thinking that this was an irrefutable argument in the case of Janey's likeness to him. However, he would have to give the other side of the question a chance to prove its point.

"Yes, Daddy." Janey slid out of her chair and held out her hand for the note. He gave it to her with a little pat that he hoped would escape Big Jane's eye. It was not that she was unsympathetic, but she could spell. He decided to change the subject.

"Now, dear, what is the news?" Big Jane shook her head and looked significantly at Janey.

"Run along, honey, you'll miss your bus." He kissed her on the forehead and ate a few bites of food while Big Jane got Janey into her raincoat and boots. Janey left the house very slowly and Big Jane was forced to open the kitchen window and spur her on occasionally. Jesse felt that this was somewhat akin to driving a horse to water, but could not at that early hour follow the thought any further. His wife closed the window, poured them some coffee, tripped over two cats and a dog and put them all outside. All that is, except one, who immediately moved over to a fuller saucer of milk.

"You've forgotten one." Jesse said helpfully. His wife looked at him with a curiously mixed expression of shock and addled fondness and said in a distinct whisper, "Shhhhh."

Jesse groaned a very silent, "Oh, no." to himself and waited for the Unspeakable News to be revealed.

"I didn't mean to be rude, dear, but we mustn't disturb her while she's eating."

"Disturb who?" He'd be damned if he'd give in without a fight this time.

"The white cat, dear."

"Which white cat? We have three, you know." That would stump her.

"The all white one with the blue eyes. The one that is pregnant." Jesse put down his fork. That was specific enough. They were talking about the white cat with the blue eyes that was pregnant. Jesse was forced to comment that she was not the first white cat in the household to be blessed in such a manner.

"But it's the first time for her and she is so cute about it."

"How so?" Jesse inquired. Big Jane had always said that cats were like people, but he had never had any concrete evidence of it. This might be a good starting point.

"Well, look at her. Isn't she just the cutest thing? You can tell she's all excited about it." Jesse looked at the white cat. She was working on her third saucer of milk, very scientifically, he thought.

"She does look a little plump."

"And just think, all of her kittens will have blue eyes." Jesse looked at his wife. She must have something definite on her mind. He remembered vaguely a promise that they would add no more pets to the household. The conversation had a trend. He did his best to stop it.

"I don't know about that. You've got blue eyes and Janey has . . ."

"Jess Adams. And besides cats are different. At least one will have blue eyes. You wait and see."

Jesse tried another tack. "They'll probably all have crooked tails, too. If there is anything that offends my nature, it's a crooked tail on a cat."

"Don't go getting logical on me. You know as well as I do that the crooked tail is environment and not heredity."

"You wouldn't want to bring your helpless kittens into such a cruel and dangerous environment, would you? Think of the responsibility." Jesse stopped. His wife was looking at him with that hurt, ill-treated look that he could not resist. He glanced at the clock and said that he would be late for work.

"But Jess . . ."

"Jane, you promised me. No more cats. That's what you said. No more cats."

"You won't have to do a thing about it, Jess. I'll take care of everything."

She was pouring him another cup of coffee. She set down the pot and ran a tentative finger through his hair.

"This is unconstitutional. Known as influencing the judge. And you are messing up my hair." Jesse knew that he was fighting a losing battle. What irritated him most was that Big Jane knew it too . . .

"Please, Jess." She knelt down on the floor and stared him in the eye. Jesse thought that he could detect a hint of a victorious chuckle.

"All right. Have your kittens. Now let me go to work so that I can support them in the manner to which they will soon become accustomed." He tried to sound bitter, but it was difficult to have the right tone of voice when being soundly kissed. Besides,

the damned cat was looking at him with the relieved expression of the pardoned convict. He found himself slightly ashamed of having been caught discussing her case in her presence. He cleared his throat and went to get his brief case. As he went out the door he turned to say goodbye to his wife. She was pouring some more milk in the saucer for the cat. Jesse wondered if a man his age would have a sibling complex. He shut the door quietly so as not to disturb fond motherhood in the making.

Jesse noticed a singular lack of differentiation in the topics of conversation pursued in his household after the day of the great announcement. Each morning Big Jane's morning bulletin would include some note on the size and condition of the white cat. The white cat herself had graduated from the nameless state that all of the solid color Adam's cats enjoyed, to a title, that of Mamma Cat. Jesse thought that this was a little previous, but Big Jane insisted on being an optimist.

Jesse had to replan his morning schedule so that he would have time to check on Mamma Cat's size and condition for himself. He argued whenever he was late for breakfast that there was a limit to the things a man would accept on report. Mamma Cat did not seem to mind this extra attention. She had long before requested her padded box, lined with one of Jesse's old bathrobes and had settled herself in the darkest corner of the den by the radiator. Jesse had been very partial to the old bathrobe and had not known of its intended use until it was too late to complain. He felt, therefore, that this ruled out any complaint, on the grounds of modesty, for his morning checkup. He began to take a genuine if slightly ribald interest in the gradual change of form, each stage of which he commented on freely at the breakfast table. This practice offended Big Jane's notions on the policy of raising sweet, innocent children, but Jesse maintained that a liberal education was good for a child, and what had they moved to the country for anyway.

Janey soon relieved her parents of a subject for contention by bringing a paper home to be signed. Her teacher was impressed by Janey's composition but considerably troubled by her inability to spell more than five out of ten words correctly. The paper was received with mixed feelings in the Adam's household. Jesse thought that the ratio was a good one and showed neatness of mind if perhaps not so much spelling ability. Big Jane was more impressed by the title of the paper and the content therein. Janey had written on the imaginative theme—"My Kat Is Gong to Hav Kitins." Aside from the spelling errors, the paper was a somewhat scholarly treatise on the physical evidence, proving the stated theory along with whatever future predictions could be made on the basis of the evidence. From the point of view of Jesse, who was a lawyer by trade, the argument was well executed. There was no doubt in his mind after reading the paper that the cat was going to have kittens, and according to Janey, there were going to

be five of them. This supposition was clearly and scientifically based on observations, some visual, which were Janey's, and some verbal; these were in most cases Jesse's.

As a result of the paper, Janey was included in the watchful circle that surrounded Mamma Cat. In view of her tender years and the tender years of her classmates, Big Jane insisted on a careful censorship of the conversation. Jesse had noticed that in the affair of the kittens he was as much of an outsider as Janey. Somehow he and his wife no longer talked the same language. His every comment on the situation was dismissed as having come from one who had no knowledge or understanding of Mamma Cat's position on the brink of motherhood.

Mamma Cat by the end of the sixth week was beginning to show signs of little understanding of her own predicament. She was no longer sleek and and white. There was only one small spot around her face and neck to indicate what color she might have been under ideal conditions. The rest of her, down to the tip of her crooked tail was nondescript gray.

"I must say, for a prospective mother, that cat is not doing much to keep up appearances." Jesse had just finished his morning checkup. "I realize it's hard for her, but surely she could manage a bath now and then." Mamma Cat padded into the kitchen behind him and started to the corner where the milk bowl was. In the middle of the floor she sat down suddenly and not too gracefully. She steadied herself on her haunches and carefully picked up one foot, to lick it and run it over her face. She had just gotten the paw behind her ear when she lost her balance and had to return the foot to the floor. She tried again with the other foot. Again gravity was too much for her. Jesse laughed.

"See what I mean? No efficiency." Big Jane did not answer him because she was busy fixing his eggs. She smiled when she looked around at Mamma Cat, as if she understood the problem at hand, and when she put the plate of eggs before Jesse, the eggs were slightly burned. He was about to complain when Mamma Cat gave up her last effort with a last uncomfortable lick over her distended front and looked at him. Her eyes were very blue and troubled, the gray patches left from her inefficient washing process appearing as dark circles under them. Jesse turned from the blue eyes of the cat only to run directly into the blue ones of his wife. A vague unrest killed his appetite and without saying anything about the condition of the eggs, he put the plate on the floor next to Mamma Cat. He drank his coffee down and then reached for his hat. After he had kissed his wife and started out the door, he paused, feeling that he had forgotten something. He could not think what it was.

"Hope she feels better soon," he said to no one in particular, and then left, wondering why he had said it. Big Jane sat for a long time at the table that morning, watching Mamma Cat eat the eggs. Mamma

Cat finished her breakfast and stretched out at Big Jane's feet. She did not stay there long. She could not find a comfortable position. She got up and walked under the table, then came back and tried again, but with no more success. She stood up and made a small unhappy noise in her throat. Big Jane smiled sympathetically and patted her head, wishing that Mamma Cat's eyes were not blue.

Jesse came home from the office at six on the day that it happened. The house was already dark and completely quiet. He turned on the kitchen light and called to see if anyone were home. The only answer came from Mamma Cat in her box. He remembered then that it was Wednesday, the maid's day off and Big Jane and Janey were at the dentist's. With a drink and a cigarette, Jesse had settled down in the den to read the evening paper and wait for the return of his family, when a sharp cry came from the box in the corner. He looked up and realized that the sound must have come from Mamma Cat.

"It's just me," he said and went back to his paper. He had gotten to the middle of the stock market returns for the day when another insistent sound came from the cat. He put down his drink and his paper and went over to the corner where the box was. Allowing a moment for his eyes to adjust to the darkness, Jesse was still startled to find himself looking at what appeared to be a mound of dirty white fur whose only distinguishing characteristics were a pair of blue eyes. The mass of the mound of fur was frightening. Jesse steadied himself on the wall.

"My God," he said aloud in order to convince himself. "K-Day has arrived and I am here alone." Mamma Cat cried out again and moved restlessly in the box. Jesse dragged deep on his cigarette and bent over to give the mound a shaky pat. It felt hot and feverish and he took his hand away. When he turned his back he could feel the probe of the blue eyes following him across the room. He sat down in the chair and was about to pick up the paper and then he saw it. The mound was making a slow and very ungainly voyage in his direction.

"No, no. Go get in your box. That's where you belong at a time like this." Mamma Cat did not stop. Jesse stood up. "Look at me, dammit. I'm the wrong kind. Can't you see? Now go away." In that moment, Jesse felt himself grow taller and taller as the cat diminished in size, until another cry cut through to his very bones. He returned to his usual size, so inadequate for the situation at hand.

"All right. Come on over then. But just for a minute. All this traveling around isn't doing you any good." The cat moved over to where he stood and Jesse, not feeling sure enough to pick her up, bent over to scratch under her chin. With unreasonable relief he heard the purr fill the room.

"That's all. Back you go." But the cat did not move. "I said that's all. Now go back to your bed like a good girl." Still no response. Jesse felt the palms

of his hands grow moist. He tried to shoo the cat in the right direction. She did not move. Finally he stood up and stared at her from all angles, once getting down on his hands and knees in order to achieve the right perspective. Then he very gently picked up Mamma Cat and carried her to the box. He returned to his chair and buried himself in the paper, trying to forget the haunting stare of the blue eyes. He felt himself being watched. This is ridiculous, he thought. I am not being watched. I have let this thing get the best of me. I shall read the funnies.

A sharp and pain-filled yowl drew his eyes away from the fate of Dick Tracy only to behold a sight infinitely more terrible. There, at his very feet, he was being presented with a kitten.

Jesse was appalled. It was not that he was unacquainted with the facts of life, only that graphic displays of anything put him at a loss. He retreated to the hall. The moisture on his forehead and in the palms of his hands made him feel clammy in the dark and quiet. He flicked on the hall light and looked at his image in the mirror.

"Coward," he said to the reflection. "Brute." He stared at Jesse Adams, the man who would not aid a poor animal in distress and said it again. The house echoed the condemnation. It was too much for Jesse. He straightened his shoulders and went back into the den. Mamma Cat was lying on the floor where he had left her, now accompanied by a small and nondescript little being that Jesse supposed was a kitten. He had always thought of kittens as troublesome but cute bits of life and fluff. This was not cute and certainly not fluffy, but troublesome, he decided, was the word.

"Is that the best you can do?" Mamma Cat gave a chortle that conveyed to him the feeling that he had not seen anything yet.

"Don't you think that your bed would be a better place for these activities?" He contemplated for a moment the advisability of moving Mamma Cat and Kitten to the box and thought better of it. He brought the box to Mamma Cat, who looked at it, and then at him, and did nothing in the way of moving.

"Well, I certainly don't want it for myself. I'm trying to be a gentleman." He fluffed up the robe in the box.

"Now," he said in his best tone. "Isn't that lovely? So comfortable."

There was no response. Jesse remembered that cats would always go where their kitten went. A plan formed in his confusion. He took out his clean handkerchief, white of course, and wrapped the kitten in it carefully. With a detached air, Mamma Cat watched until the kitten was safely stowed in the box.

"There," Jesse sighed. "There's your kitten. Now go to it." Mamma Cat got up slowly and poked her head over the edge of the box, staring intently at the white bundle in the corner to which Jesse obligingly pointed. Yes, that did seem to be her kitten. She turned her blue eyes thankfully in his direction and

looked again into the box. Jesse was relieved. Now there would be no more of this nonsense. What he needed was a drink. The ice was in the kitchen and the bottle was in the living room. This posed a problem. In order to have both ice and liquor, he would have to go from the kitchen to the living room. That would involve passing the den. He gave up the ice in favor of the liquor and settled himself on the couch in the living room. A deep sense of peace crept over him as he allowed his taut nerves to uncurl. He even smiled. It wasn't often that a man proved so ingenious in a delicate situation. The warmth of the drink and the soft light in the room suddenly overcame his natural alertness. Jesse went to sleep.

"I am dreaming," he mumbled sometime later. "I do not hear a cat breathing in my ear. It's just my nerves." The purring grew louder, punctuated by very small cries, most unlike Mamma Cat's vigorous tone. Jesse opened his eyes. No cat. The purring continued. He sat up. Still no cat.

"All right, I give up. Where are you?"

Mamma Cat raised her head over the edge of the fruit bowl, long since empty, that sat on the table beside the couch. She spoke to him politely. Jesse put both feet on the floor, settled them firmly, and leaned over to peer into the fruit bowl. There at the bottom of the bowl, tucked carefully onto the space where Mamma Cat wasn't, was another kitten, considerably more vocal than the first. Jesse sank back into the cushions, feeling undone. Then a surge of anger brought him to his feet.

"Have you no shame, cat? You don't deserve the name, Mamma Cat." He glared into the innocent blue eyes, finding no shame there. "Far be it from me to teach you the maternal instinct. I will not even ask where your other kitten is, cold and deserted by an unnatural mother. I will merely point out that you are inhabiting my wife's favorite fruit bowl." Mamma Cat purred.

"Go on, ignore me. Just wait until Big Jane comes home." He looked at his watch. It was almost seven-thirty. The thought of a female conspiracy unsettled his already shattered composure. He picked up the fruit bowl and set it on the floor, allowing Mamma Cat to depart in ease.

"Come on," he said, "what say we consolidate." He started for the den, followed half-heartedly by Mamma Cat. They had just reached the green chair by the door, when Jesse heard another small cry. He looked into the fruit bowl and waited. The cry came again, but the fruit bowl was silent. He looked at Mamma Cat. She seemed as surprised as he, and had stopped to listen with her head cocked to one side. Jesse shifted his gaze from Mamma Cat to the green chair and was convinced that he was developing a seventh sense. There was a kitten in the chair. He would swear to it.

"Lost something?" he asked Mamma Cat. She appeared puzzled.

"Well, let's look together, shall we?" And Mamma

Cat put her paws up on the chair while Jesse leaned over her.

"Yes, there it is. And such a nice white one, too." Mamma Cat sat back for a moment in contemplation of this new discovery and then continued on her journey to the den. Jesse was left to place the kitten in the bowl beside its successor. Noting the condition of the chair cushion, he picked that up too and proceeded to the den. Mamma Cat was waiting beside the box for him to deposit his treasure, which he did. He then looked at her expectantly. She looked back, confused.

"I want you to get into that box. That's not too much to ask, is it?"

She got in. Jesse left her counting the take and went to the kitchen to salvage the remains of the chair cushion. He put the cover in the bowl to soak, feeling that any conservation of energy was legitimate at this stage.

"I need a bath and a drink." His wife was obviously not going to come home and feed him. He strode past the den in a manner that he had hoped would discourage any hangers-on and had reached the bottle in the living room before Mamma Cat at a full trot caught up with him. Jesse's hand shook as he poured a stiff one. He drank it.

"Madam, do not think that I am flattered by your attentions." He was a little surprised by the volume of his voice. Perhaps he should go into court work. "Go back to your hungry children. Have you no pity?" He brandished the glass under her whiskers. "Do you realize that you are driving me to drink? What will become of my family?" Mamma Cat sat down suddenly to avoid the second sweep of the glass. "I see you have not considered that." He put down his glass and started upstairs to run his bath. Mamma Cat did not hesitate. She bounded after him.

He turned on the third step. "I am a modest man. Go away." Three steps later she was still one step behind. Jesse sat down on the step and gazed at her long and hard. She turned her head shyly away. Modesty no longer prevailed in Jesse's mind. He reasoned that Mamma Cat in sight was a safer bet than Mamma Cat on the loose. However, it did not do to assume too much. He went back for the box. The five of them then proceeded to the bathroom. Gathering up his pajamas with his free hand, Jesse conducted the group into the bathroom and placed the box conveniently next to the tub. Next to the box he placed the bottle and in the box he placed Mamma Cat.

"This is the kind of organization that wins battles," he told Mamma Cat.

The bath consisted more of a running conversation between Mamma Cat and Jesse than of any serious attempts at washing on his part. He was far too interested in the conversation. Later, Jesse reflected that he would not have missed any of the discussion if it had cost him his soul. He learned the fears and the joys of

Motherhood, and was the only witness to the birth of Kittens Four and Five. He really felt that Mamma Cat would not have had such an easy time without his gentle encouragement. They had reached a satisfactory balance in their relationship where they could talk things over frankly. He found the experience enriching, to which Mamma Cat heartily agreed.

When Big Jane arrived, it was after nine and she found Jesse in bed, bottle in one hand and the other hand dangling comfortingly into the box of kittens. He opened one eye very slightly when she came into the room and smiled warmly.

"My family," he said, indicating vaguely in the box. Big Jane took the bottle out of his hand as gently as possible and turned out the light.

The next morning before breakfast, Jesse had some trouble tying his tie. He had had even more trouble tying his shoes laces, but that had been before Big Jane had informed him in a voice that he felt was much too loud, that he was late and Janey had to have a paper signed and Mamma Cat was waiting for her kittens. Jesse wondered if the stairwell system worked two ways. He had a few things to say but thought that the effort would be in vain. He picked up his briefcase and the box of kittens and went downstairs.

"Just coffee for me, please," he said, handing Mamma Cat to her kittens.

"Jess. That isn't enough to start out on." Jesse suspected that his wife was smiling.

"On the contrary, it is more than enough." He sat down and picked up his coffee cup. Halfway up from the table to his mouth, the cup paused. He set it back in the saucer. There was a familiar piece of paper in his plate, white, with liberal dashes of red. He looked at Janey.

"Score?"

"Forty," she said in the smallest voice she could muster. Jesse felt a deep sense of depression settle over him. You brought children into the world with what cost, and then they got forty on a spelling test. He could see only one plan of action.

"You will stay in the house this entire week, young lady, and study your spelling."

"But, Daddy . . ."

"Let's have no more discussion. This is for your own good. When you grow up and have children of your own, you will realize what a responsibility it is in the matter of discipline." Janey looked at her mother, who was choking in her coffee cup. Janey was confused. She picked up the paper that her father had signed and ran to catch the bus.

"What's the matter with you? Do you think I was too harsh with her?"

"No, dear, of course not. And you will insist that the kittens are housebroken early, won't you?"

Jesse was not sure that he had heard that last statement of his wife's correctly. He worried about it all day, but then Big Jane was never very coherent early in the morning.

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## Death in April

(Continued from Page 8)

was only a slight hindrance to her speed and she was breathless and still warm when she came to the house. The car was not in the driveway, so she knew that no one was home. Eden was not home. But Julie opened the door and walked through the kitchen up the stairs which did not blind her with meaningless pictures now.

She walked quietly through the hallways, and into the room where the flowers and casket had been. It was dim as before, but Julie did not mind and she did not hesitate, passing by the curtained windows to the place next to the window seat where the coffin had been. Julie tucked her knees under her and rested her head against the chintzed material of the window seat. And she was saying, thank you, thank you to the room and to Fritz and to everything that was clear. When she opened her eyes she thought that she saw Fritz there, wearing the red shirt which gave a soft glow to his face.



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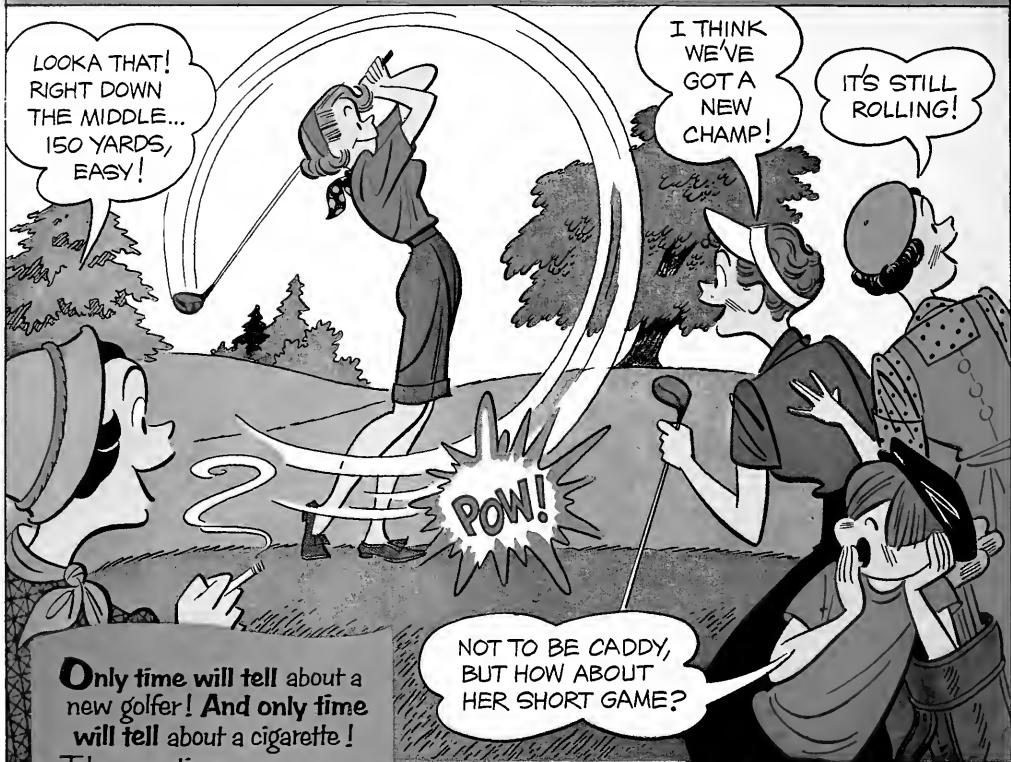
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